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United Nations

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

General Assembly
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Sixty-second Session
Supplement No. 35 (A/62/35)

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Contents

Chapter		Paragraphs	Page
	Letter of transmittal		iv
I.	Introduction	1–10	1
II.	Mandate of the Committee	11	4
III.	Organization of work	12–16	5
	A. Membership and officers	12–14	5
	B. Participation in the work of the Committee	15–16	5
IV.	Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine	17–35	6
V.	Action taken by the Committee	36–65	13
	A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/22	36–50	13
	1. Action taken in the General Assembly and the Security Council	37–45	13
	2. Action taken by the Bureau of the Committee	46–50	14
	B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 61/22 and 61/23	51–65	15
	1. Programme of international meetings and conferences	51–54	15
	2. Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations	55–56	16
	3. Cooperation with civil society	57–60	16
	4. Research, monitoring and publications	61	17
	5. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine	62	17
	6. Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority	63	18
	7. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People	64–65	18
VI.	Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/24	66–75	19
VII.	Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee	76–85	21

Letter of transmittal

[4 October 2007]

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 2 of its resolution 61/22 of 1 December 2006.

The report covers the period from 4 October 2006 to 4 October 2007.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Paul **Badji**
Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Chapter I
Introduction

1. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly by its resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.

2. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report to the General Assembly[1] were endorsed by the Assembly as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports,[2] the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination. The recommendations of the Committee contained in its first report could not be implemented, and the Assembly each year renewed the Committee's mandate and requested it to intensify efforts in pursuit of its objectives.

3. Since 1991, the Committee has consistently supported the peace process. It welcomed the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference that launched the Middle East peace process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It also welcomed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (A/48/486-S/26560, annex) and subsequent implementation agreements. The Committee has strongly supported the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders on the basis of the 1949 armistice lines, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003). The Committee welcomed and supported the Quartet's road map and called on the parties to implement it. In keeping with its mandate, the Committee continued to work towards enabling the Palestinian people to realize its inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and to its own independent State, on all Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem. The Committee also promotes support and assistance by the international community to the Palestinian people.

4. The reporting period was characterized by the reinforcement of the Israeli occupation policies and practices in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, as well as by a further weakening of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority as a result of those policies and the decision by major international donors to cease direct assistance programmes to the Hamas-led cabinet that took office in March 2006. The period was also marked by the consistent efforts of major Palestinian political organizations and groups to achieve national unity, which was briefly achieved in March 2007 with the establishment of a National

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/31/35).

[2] Since the thirty-first session, the Committee has submitted annual reports to the General Assembly; all such reports have been issued as supplement No. 35 of the sessional documentation of the Assembly.

Unity Government following the Mecca agreement, but which collapsed soon thereafter.

5. The Israeli army continued to conduct military operations in Palestinian population centres, including by carrying out extrajudicial killings, house demolitions and arrests. The Palestinian response included regular rocket and mortar fire by armed Palestinian groups and a suicide attack within Israel. For most of the year the political process remained stalled. Only after the dissolution of the Palestinian national unity government in June, following the armed takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas, did diplomatic activities, including meetings between the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Olmert, resume, leading to the release of a limited number of Palestinian prisoners, as well as part of the tax money collected by Israel in accordance with bilateral agreements but withheld since January 2006. Direct donor assistance to Palestinian Authority institutions in the West Bank also resumed.

6. Despite a certain diplomatic momentum achieved since June, mainly through the re-engagement of major international stakeholders, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remained complex and volatile. Due to the continued imposition of prolonged closures by Israel, the Gaza Strip remained isolated from other parts of the Palestinian Territory, solely allowing an inflow of basic humanitarian goods. Economic activity has been stifled. The humanitarian situation has reached crisis proportions. In the West Bank, normal life was being hampered by continuous Israeli military operations, hundreds of checkpoints, the settlements infrastructure, the construction of the wall and periodic closures.

7. Throughout the year, the Committee remained deeply concerned about the continuing illegal settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the unlawful construction of the wall in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (see A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1). The Committee cautioned that the continuation of such policies posed a grave threat to the prospects of a peaceful, negotiated solution of the conflict. It precluded any possibility of improving the economic and humanitarian situation and was making a two-State solution virtually impossible.

8. The Secretary-General was encouraged to expedite the functioning of the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution ES-10/17. The Committee called upon all Governments to fulfil their obligations under international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, and to take the necessary steps to ensure that Israel complied with its obligations in this regard.

9. The Committee continued to support the efforts by the international community to unblock the stalemate in the political process and resume meaningful negotiations between the parties. It welcomed the renewed Arab Peace Initiative and concrete steps taken by the League of Arab States to implement it. The Committee supported the reinvigorated efforts by the Quartet and its individual members aimed at resuming the peace process.

10. The Committee called upon the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to unite behind the elected President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and his government and all democratically elected

Palestinian institutions and to resolve their political differences by peaceful means. The Committee reiterated its long-standing position that the Palestine Liberation Organization was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and, as such, an essential party to any negotiations aimed at resolving the question of Palestine by peaceful means. The Committee invited the international community to extend all possible cooperation to the Palestinian leadership in its quest for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Chapter II
Mandate of the Committee

11. On 1 December 2006, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (see resolution 61/22), requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat with the necessary resources to carry out its programme of work (see resolution 61/23) and requested the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat (see resolution 61/24). On the same date, the Assembly adopted resolution 61/25 entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

Chapter III
Organization of work

A. Membership and officers

12. The Committee is composed of the following Member States: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

13. At its 299th meeting, on 27 February 2007, the Committee re-elected Paul Badji (Senegal) as Chairman, Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) as Vice-Chairman and Victor Camilleri (Malta) as Rapporteur. At the same meeting, the Committee elected Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chairman. At its 303rd meeting on 17 September 2007, the Committee elected Saviour F. Borg (Malta) as Rapporteur, replacing Victor Camilleri, who had been assigned by his Government to another post.

14. Also at the 299th meeting, the Committee adopted its programme of work for 2007.[3]

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

15. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all United Nations Member States and observers wishing to participate in the work of the Committee as observers were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer, attended all of its meetings and made observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee and its Bureau.

16. In 2007, the Committee again welcomed as observers all States and organizations that had participated in its work in the preceding year.[4]

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[3] A/AC.183/2007/CRP.1.

[4] The observers at the Committee meetings were: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam and Yemen, as well as the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Palestine.

Chapter IV

Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine

17. Pursuant to its mandate, the Committee continued to monitor the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as relevant political developments. The Committee has emphasized that the Israeli occupation remained the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For 40 years, the occupying Power has been systematically altering the Palestinian land through unlawful policies and practices, including settlement construction and, more recently, the construction of the wall in the West Bank. Continued closures, the sealing-off of the Gaza Strip, Israeli military operations in Palestinian population centres and the humiliating system of checkpoints throughout the West Bank have rendered the Palestinian Authority nearly dysfunctional, caused socio-economic decline and contributed to the polarization within Palestinian society. In addition, tensions among Palestinian factions continued to intensify.

18. Regional and international leaders have stepped up their engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian issue, intensifying efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In late March, a meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers adopted the Riyadh Declaration (see A/61/922), which endorsed the Arab Peace Initiative (A/56/1026-S/2002/932, annex II, resolution 14/221), providing a framework for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). On 31 July, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed an endorsement of the initiative. Egypt remained active in brokering a ceasefire among Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip. Dialogue at the highest levels, which included discussions on the Arab Peace Initiative, took place between Israeli, Jordanian and Egyptian officials. Meanwhile, the Quartet met several times, and on 27 June it named former British Prime Minister Tony Blair as special envoy to lead the process of Palestinian institution-building. Norway proposed the reactivation of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians to oversee assistance management, financial support to the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian institutional reform. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee met at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 24 September, prior to the meeting of donors planned for December 2007. On 16 July, United States President George Bush announced his intention to convene an international meeting later in the year to be chaired by the United States Secretary of State. It was envisaged that Israel, the Palestinians and regional neighbours would participate in the meeting. The Quartet and the League of Arab States welcomed President Bush's statement renewing the commitment of the United States to a negotiated two-State solution and for an international meeting. President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert began to meet on a more regular basis. At their meeting on 10 September, they agreed to set up negotiating teams to work on key issues in preparation for the forthcoming international meeting set for November 2007. The idea of convening the meeting on Israeli-Palestinian peace was supported by the Quartet when it met in New York on 23 September.

19. During the period under review, the Committee remained extremely concerned about the Israeli military incursions into the Gaza Strip and military operation in the West Bank, which had resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries among Palestinian civilians. In early November 2006, a week-long operation, code-named "Autumn clouds", in Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip left 82 Palestinians dead, 21 of

them children. At least 18 homes, a mosque and the offices of a non-governmental organization were demolished, and 150 homes were damaged. In the early morning hours of 8 November, with most of the residents of Beit Hanoun still asleep, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) artillery struck a residential area, killing at least 19, including eight children and seven women. In late November 2006, a mutual ceasefire in the Gaza Strip was agreed upon between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert. However, the ceasefire did not extend to the West Bank, where Israeli military operations continued. As of February 2007, the number of IDF search-and-arrest operations in the West Bank had increased by 58 per cent over the previous month. Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians in the West Bank rose by 88 per cent during the same period.

20. In late February, in Nablus, the IDF launched a large-scale operation code-named "Hot winter". While uncovering sites used for preparing explosives, IDF imposed a curfew that disrupted civilian life and humanitarian operations and affected tens of thousands of Palestinians in the city. In May, some 54 Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip. The majority of the deaths occurred as a result of Israeli air strikes on Hamas bases and vehicles carrying members of Hamas or the Islamic Jihad. In May alone, the Israeli Air Force carried out 65 air strikes on Palestinian targets.

21. The Committee denounced the excessive and indiscriminate use of force, extrajudicial killings, the destruction of Palestinian homes, civilian infrastructure and agricultural lands and the attendant devastating effects on the Palestinian civilian population. At the same time, it strongly condemned all attacks against Israeli civilians. It is estimated that since the start of the second intifada in 2000, close to 4,800 Palestinians have been killed and some 31,500 wounded by the Israeli occupying forces. As of August 2007, there were over 950 Palestinian children under the age of 18 dead as a result of the violence. The number of Israelis killed during the same period was 1,024.

22. The restrictions on movement imposed by Israel in the West Bank continued to affect every aspect of Palestinian life, including access to medical facilities and schools and the ability of Palestinians to reach their places of work. These measures have also impaired family and social ties, have led to a decline in the provision of infrastructure services and law enforcement in areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Israeli commitments to ease movement and access in the West Bank remained unmet. Since the conclusion of the Agreement on Movement and Access entered into between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on 15 November 2005, closure levels have doubled and the number of checkpoints has increased. In September 2007, a total of 572 physical obstacles to movement were in place, a 52 per cent increase from August 2005. In the Gaza Strip, only about 10 per cent of the targets set out by the agreement, or 400 truckloads of exported goods per day, was reached as of April. The Al-Muntar (Karni) and Rafah crossings were open only sporadically.

23. The decision of Israel not to have contacts with a Palestinian government, that included Hamas, its withholding of taxes and tariffs owed to the Palestinian Authority, which total some $50 million per month, and the halting of direct international financial aid to the Palestinian Authority has had a devastating effect on Palestinian institutions and on the provision of basic services to the Palestinian people. In April, strikes by Palestinian Authority employees and local municipal

workers were held to protest the lack of regular payment of salaries. Tensions among the various Palestinian factions intensified in mid-December 2006 and again in early January 2007. In February, under the auspices of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Mecca Agreement was reached between Fatah and Hamas on the formation of a national unity government. On 17 March, after being approved by the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Palestinian National Unity Government was sworn in, in accordance with the programme agreed at Mecca. With a lack of improvement in the security situation, particularly in the Gaza Strip, the new Minister of the Interior resigned on 14 May. Inter-factional fighting continued in the Gaza Strip, compounded by targeted Israeli air operations and rocket attacks by Palestinian groups against Israeli civilians. From 9 to 15 June, the military wing of Hamas and its executive force took control of the Gaza Strip. The armed takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas forces seriously damaged efforts to achieve national unity and left the intra-Palestinian dialogue in an inconclusive state. On 14 June, President Abbas dissolved the Government, dismissed Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and declared a state of emergency for 30 days. A new Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad was appointed, in addition to a new Foreign Minister and Finance Minister.

24. The internal security situation in the Gaza Strip has had an adverse effect on the humanitarian situation and the provision of humanitarian aid. The daily lives of civilians were severely disrupted as people were afraid to leave their homes, affecting both the public sector and commercial life. The Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing and Rafah terminal have been progressively closed since the fighting broke out in mid-June, and the alternate entry points (Sufa and Kerem Shalom) have barely provided sufficient access for much-needed commercial and humanitarian supplies. The Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing operated periodically for "urgent, special cases", allowing exit from the Gaza Strip, but, as of September, at least 100,000 Gazans who might have been expected to enter or exit the Gaza Strip were denied passage. Some 3,500 Palestinians were stranded for almost two months on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing, including patients returning from medical treatment abroad. At least 30 Palestinians died while waiting to return. The continued closure of the Gaza Strip borders plunged the Palestinian economy into even further decline, dramatically increasing the already significant need for humanitarian assistance as well as the level of dependency. The Committee was greatly alarmed by the decision taken by the Israeli Security Cabinet on 19 September to consider the Gaza Strip a "hostile territory", and to apply additional sanctions to the territory, in order to restrict the passage of various goods to the Gaza Strip and reduce the supply of vital services such as fuel and electricity. The Committee stated that the decision was a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and yet another form of collective punishment of the Palestinian people, which, if implemented, was bound to substantially worsen the already deplorable living conditions of the civilian population in the occupied Gaza Strip.

25. On 15 December 2006, the General Assembly adopted resolution ES-10/17, in which it requested the setting up of the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory within six months. On 10 May 2007, the Secretary-General appointed three international experts to begin the work on the Register. The Committee expressed the hope that the Office of the Register of Damage would begin implementation of the Assembly

resolution as well as the conclusions contained in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

26. Nevertheless, the construction of the wall continued in 2006-2007, in disregard of the advisory opinion. Parts of it extend deep into the West Bank. The wall has been completed along more than half of its planned route. Only 20 per cent of the wall's route correspond with the Green Line, the rest has been built on confiscated Palestinian land. About 10.7 per cent of the West Bank, 154,320 acres, is trapped between the wall and the Green Line. Of that, 141,974 acres (92 per cent) are in the Jerusalem area. In January, the Israeli media reported that Prime Minister Olmert had approved a change in the wall's route near the settlement of "Modi'in Illit", which would incorporate the settlements of "Nili" and "Na'aleh", effectively annexing them to Israel. If approved by the Cabinet, the decision would move the wall at least five kilometres east of the Green Line in this region. As a result, some 20,000 Palestinians living in five villages (Rantis, Shaqba, Qibya, Budrus and Ni'lin) would be surrounded by walls and security roads, creating an enclave in the West Bank. By April, the wall construction around the "Ateret" settlement had been completed. A wall now encircles the settlement on the land confiscated by IDF and belonging to Palestinians from Atara and Umm Safa. During the reporting period, the construction of the wall around East Jerusalem involved the confiscation of 3,360 acres, and the displacement of 1,150 households comprising 5,290 people. On 4 September, the Israeli High Court of Justice ordered a change in the route of the wall in the Bil'in area after Palestinian villagers protested that the route would annex their agricultural land.

27. Despite the resumption of payments of salaries by the Palestinian Authority in July 2007, poverty rates remain unacceptably high. The poverty line is defined based on a monthly income of $501.2 United States dollars ($) per month for a family of two adults and four children. At least 70 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip, 56 per cent of the West Bank and 19 per cent of East Jerusalem households are living below the poverty line. Poverty increased among Palestinian Authority employees from 46 per cent in May 2006 to 50 per cent in May 2007. The total accumulative and direct losses in the private sector since the closure of the Gaza Strip had been estimated at $35 million, with a daily loss in the range of about half a million dollars. In the industrial sector, the vast majority (nearly 90 per cent) of import-dependent industries have closed down and over 66,000 workers have been temporarily laid off. The World Bank has estimated that if a third of those laid off do not return to work, the unemployment rate will reach unprecedented levels of about 44 per cent. With household income continuing to decrease, Palestinian households have resorted to negative coping mechanisms, such as borrowing money, selling possessions, reducing health care and food consumption and taking children out of school.

28. Over the year, the Committee continued to express concern over the illegal settlement activities in and around East Jerusalem, as well as in the rest of the West Bank. In November 2006, the Anata village council reported the issuance of military orders confiscating 1,328 dunams of land in East Jerusalem, for the expansion of the "Almon" settlement near "Ma'ale Adumim". In January, the Jerusalem municipality commission for planning and construction approved a plan to build 983 housing units in the Har Homa settlement in a new area between Sur Bahir and Bethlehem. In March, the Israel Land Administration published tenders to construct 44 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Har Homa. A plan was approved in March

to expand the settlement of "Adam" ("Geva Binyamin") as part of the larger expansion plan for the Jerusalem settlement of "Neve Ya'acov" and its connection with "Adam". The plan included the construction of 1,200-unit neighbourhood for ultra-Orthodox Jews. Meanwhile, a request by Palestinian Jerusalemites living in the Silwan neighbourhood to construct 70 apartments was rejected on the basis that the land was a natural and historic area. Planned settlement expansion in the areas in and around Neve Ya'acov and the former site of the Atarot airport would link settlements in the area of East Jerusalem on both sides of the wall, establishing an unbroken belt of settlements along East Jerusalem's northern perimeter to Road 60 settlements — from "Ma'ale Adumim" north to "Shilo" and "Eli" — to the Tel Aviv metropolis and the coastal plain. On 11 May, the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Yehoshua Pollak, said the intention was to create a contiguous Jewish residential area linking East Jerusalem with major West Bank settlement blocks. In the West Bank, pressure from two settlements ("Na'ale" and "Nili") resulted in Prime Minister Olmert ordering, on 31 January, that the two settlements be included west of the wall, necessitating a 12 kilometre addition to it. Some 20,000 Palestinians would be directly affected by the new construction, creating two Palestinian pockets accessible to areas east of the wall only through planned underground tunnels. In March 2007, approximately 3,500 settlers arrived at the site of the evacuated settlement of "Homesh" after the Israel Defense Forces had allowed them access, with the intention of resettling there after having been evacuated in 2005. Most construction continued to be associated with the largest settlements, such as "Beitar Ilit", "Modi'in Ilit", "Givat Ze'ev" and "Ma'ale Adumim". In addition to the focus on large settlements, expansion continued in some smaller ones, including "Anatot", "Givat Benjamin", "Har Adar", "Kochav Ya'acov", "Oranit" and the hilltop settlements of "Itamar", "Yitzhar", and "Elon Moreh". Despite the obligation of Israel under the road map, none of the additional 101 posts in the West Bank were removed. There were at least six roads, all on the eastern side of the wall, reaching some 33 kilometres in length, being paved or widened for the exclusive use of a small group of settlers.

29. Israel's Interior Ministry has reported that during 2006, the settler population in the West Bank increased by 5.8 per cent, from 253,748 to 268,379. In East Jerusalem, the settler population has been stagnant for a decade, holding at around 200,000. The population of "Ma'ale Adumim" increased by 1,644 to 31,615. During 2007, "Modi'in Ilit", which grew by 4,000 (11 per cent) to 30,425, might well emerge as the largest West Bank settlement (outside East Jerusalem). Settler violence in the West Bank increased in 2007, particularly in Hebron. Since the city was divided in 1997 under the Hebron agreement, 35,000 Palestinians living there have suffered from unending incidents of violence at the hands of some 500 settlers. Over 40 per cent of the Palestinians who once lived in Hebron have left their homes without compensation. About 2,500 Palestinians who owned shops and businesses have been forced to close them since the outbreak of the intifada. Settlers from Hebron's "Beit Hadassah" settlement beat and injured a 13-year-old Palestinian and beat a Palestinian man with Down Syndrome. Elsewhere in the West Bank, settlers uprooted olive tress, damaged water pipes in Palestinian homes, ploughed Palestinian land, opened settlement sewage pipes on Palestinian agricultural lands, fired at Palestinians and destroyed plants and crops. On 2 August, two settlers attacked United Nations personnel driving in the South Hebron Hills. There have also been attacks by Palestinians against settlers, including a stabbing incident in February in which a settler from the "Bat Ayin" settlement was killed.

30. As of June 2007, over 10,400 Palestinians remained in 30 Israeli prisons, detention facilities and camps. Of those, 118 were women (including minors, pregnant women and mothers) and close to 376 were child prisoners under the age of 18. Israel regards Palestinian children as adults from the age of 12, in breach of its own juvenile law. A survey of former child detainees estimated that 60 per cent of the children interviewed were reported to have been subjected to physical coercion or inducement to collaborate with Israeli authorities. Some 970 Palestinians have been kept in administrative detention without trial, and 15 have been held in isolation for over five years. Moreover, prisons and detention centres often provide prisoners with little or no protection from summer heat or winter cold, and they are poorly maintained and overcrowded. At least 183 prisoners have died in Israeli prisons since 1967 and about 1,000 inmates have suffered from serious illnesses. On 20 July, Israel released 255 Palestinian prisoners after they signed a form promising not to engage in terrorist activities. On 1 and 2 October, Israel released another group of 86 prisoners. The former Minister of Higher Education of the Palestinian Authority, Nasr al-Sha'ir, and the former Minister of Prisoners' Affairs, Wasfi Kabaha, and 45 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council continue to be held in detention in Israel. The Committee reiterated its call for the release of Palestinian prisoners and for the safe release of captured Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit.

31. Women, children and the elderly continued to suffer under the occupation. Close to 30 per cent of pregnant women in the West Bank had difficulties in accessing antenatal care and safe delivery facilities, mostly due to closures, delays at checkpoints and the wall. The education sector is under increasing pressure since the cutting of aid to the Palestinian Authority. The wall and other movement restrictions impaired access of students and teachers to schools and universities. In the Sifa area, north-west of Beit Lahiya, the ongoing presence of the IDF forced a significant number of students to relocate to other villages to attend school.

32. In comparison to the 2006 average, the total water supply decreased by 12 per cent in the West Bank and 42 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Factional fighting damaged the electricity network for the wells in the Gaza Strip and increased the need for fuel to power backup generators. In addition, chemical stocks needed to maintain water quality were dangerously low, while several shipments of chlorine and other disinfecting agents were blocked at the Israeli border. Most of the work of humanitarian organizations, especially those working on water and sanitation, was also halted. Overall, some 70,103 households in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were not connected to a public water network, with 5 per cent of households depending on water wells. As for waste water, less than half of the total number of households (45.3 per cent) were connected to waste water networks, and only 4.5 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip considered their water to be of good quality.

33. Throughout the year, the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) became even more crucial as the situation, particularly in the Gaza Strip, turned increasingly desperate. Some 860,000 refugees in the Gaza Strip, almost two thirds of the overall population, depended on UNRWA emergency food assistance. In addition, one million people depended on its regular health services and 195,000 children were enrolled in its schools. The deteriorating internal security situation and periodic Israeli incursions caused UNRWA to scale back or suspend its operations several times. In early

February, UNRWA headquarters and field offices in the Gaza Strip, 83 schools and its food distribution centre in Beach Camp briefly closed as factional violence placed staff and thousands of children in school at risk. The violence escalated in mid-June, resulting in the deaths of two UNRWA workers. The takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas resulted in a further tightening of Israeli controls on the movement of persons and goods, deepening already severe unemployment and poverty and increasing the already heavy burden on the Agency. In early July, UNRWA was obliged to halt $93 million in building projects because construction materials were not available on the local market. The halt affected the repair of shelters for 16,000 refugees. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate in the second half of 2007. In the West Bank, the continued construction of the separation barrier and associated land seizures, together with an increased number of Israeli checkpoints and movement barriers, severely affected the refugee population. By October, UNRWA had received pledges amounting to only half of its $246 million Emergency Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2007.

34. The work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People on crucial projects continued with the assistance of Governments and United Nations agencies. Projects on poverty alleviation were assisted by the Islamic Development Bank, including a $30 million microfinance programme for deprived Palestinians. Efforts to rehabilitate the agricultural sector, particularly in the Gaza Strip, were enhanced with the assistance of the Government of Japan and the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development. To improve water supply, the UNDP programme launched a project providing support to the Bedouin community in the Jericho area. A mental health project was established, with assistance from the French Development Agency, to help relieve the negative psychological effects inflicted on Palestinian children and their families in the West Bank and Gaza. The construction of the Qalandiya Olympic stadium and the Qalandiya Road were made possible with the assistance of the Government of Germany.

35. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the increasingly important work of the United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in enhancing its coordination in the distribution of humanitarian assistance. The Committee noted that its 2007 Consolidated Appeal, which had been set at $453 million, focused on employment generation and food assistance; health and education; agriculture, livestock, water and sanitation; and the better assessment of humanitarian protection needs.

Chapter V

Action taken by the Committee

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/22

36. In pursuance of its mandate, the Committee continued to mobilize the international community in support of the Palestinian people, in cooperation with United Nations bodies, Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and others, as indicated below.

1. Action taken in the General Assembly and the Security Council

Resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly

37. On 17 November 2006, the emergency special session of the General Assembly was resumed (thirteenth resumption) at the request of the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of November 2006 and on behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States (A/ES-10/366), and the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in New York and on behalf of the States members of the Movement (A/ES-10/367), to address the Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, in particular the killing of Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006 under the item entitled "Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory". The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement (A/ES-10/PV.28). At the end of the debate, on the same day, the Assembly adopted resolution ES-10/16.

38. On 15 December 2006, the emergency special session of the General Assembly was resumed (fourteenth resumption) at the request of the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of November 2006 and on behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States (A/ES-10/370), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations, in her capacity as Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in New York (A/ES-10/371) and the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Group in New York (A/ES-10/372) to consider the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 (A/ES-10/361) under the item entitled "Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory". Twenty-eight speakers took part in the debate (see A/ES-10/PV.30 and 31). At the end of the debate, on the same day, the Assembly adopted resolution ES-10/17, in which it called for the expeditious establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

39. In a letter dated 21 December 2006 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General informed the Assembly of his efforts to implement General Assembly resolution ES-10/16 (A/ES-10/374).

Meetings of the Security Council

40. During the period under review, the Security Council continued to monitor the situation on the ground and the efforts to implement the road map.

41. The Security Council met on 9 November 2006, at the request of the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of November 2006 and on behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States (S/2006/868), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Group in New York and on behalf of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (S/2006/869), and the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-aligned Movement and on behalf of the States members of the Movement (S/2006/871). The Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Badji, took part in the debate and made a statement (S/PV.5564 Resumption 1 and Corr. 1). At its 5565th meeting, on 11 November 2006, the Council voted on a draft resolution submitted by Qatar (S/2006/878). The result of the vote was 10 votes in favour, 1 against and 4 abstentions. The draft resolution was not adopted owing to the negative vote of a permanent member (S/PV.5565).

42. The Security Council held its 5584th meeting on 12 December 2006 for its monthly briefing on the situation in the Middle East. At the end of the meeting, the President of the Council read out a statement (S/PRST/2006/51) on behalf of the Council (S/PV.5584).

43. The Security Council also held monthly briefings throughout the year under the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". Some meetings were followed by a debate.

44. Debates following the monthly briefings were held on 13 February 2007, at which the Chairman of the Committee, Paul Badji, made a statement (S/PV.5629 Resumption 1); 25 April 2007 (S/PV.5667); and 29 August 2007 (S/PV.5736).

45. On 30 May 2007, the President of the Security Council issued a press statement on the breakdown of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip (see SC/9028-PAL/2077).

2. Action taken by the Bureau of the Committee

46. On 26 April 2007, the Bureau of the Committee met with the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and discussed the latest political developments and the Committee's programme of activities.

47. On 11 May 2007, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement on the appointment of experts to the Board of the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (GA/PAL/1053).

48. On 7 June 2007, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement to mark 40 years of occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (GA/PAL/1056).

49. On 3 July 2007, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement voicing its grave concern about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (GA/PAL/1058).

50. On 20 September, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement on Israel's decision to declare the Gaza Strip "hostile territory" (GA/PAL/1064).

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 61/22 and 61/23

1. Programme of international meetings and conferences

51. Through its programme of international meetings and conferences, the Committee continued to raise international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

52. In the period under review, the following international events were held under the auspices of the Committee:

(a) United Nations Asian Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Kuala Lumpur, 15 and 16 December 2006;

(b) United Nations Forum of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, Kuala Lumpur, 17 December 2006;

(c) United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Doha, 5 and 6 February 2007;

(d) United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Rome, 22 and 23 March 2007;

(e) Consultations of the Committee delegation with civil society organizations on the question of Palestine, Rome, 24 March 2007;

(f) United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine, Pretoria, 9 and 10 May 2007;

(g) Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Pretoria, 11 May 2007;

(h) United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, European Parliament, Brussels, 30 and 31 August 2007.

53. All of the above events were attended by representatives of Governments, Palestine, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations system entities, as well as representatives of civil society and the media. The reports of the meetings were issued as publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights and were made available through the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and the Division's website.

54. In Kuala Lumpur, during the United Nations Asian Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Committee delegation was received by Dato' Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia. In Doha, in connection with the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian

People, the Committee delegation met with Ahmad Bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar. On the margins of the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People held in Brussels, the Committee delegation had a meeting with Ambassador Jan Grauls, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

2. Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations

55. Throughout the year, the Committee continued its close cooperation with the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference through the participation of the Chairman in their meetings and through periodic consultations at United Nations Headquarters.

56. The Committee continued its cooperation on the question of Palestine with States members of the European Union. On the sidelines of the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Brussels, the delegation held separate meetings with Belén Martínez Carbonell, Member of the Cabinet of European Commissioner for External Affairs, Benita Ferrero-Waldner; Leonidas Tezapsidis, Head of Near East Unit of the European Commission; and Ambassador Christian F. Jouret, Head of Unit, Task Force Mediterranean/Barcelona/Middle East, of the Council of the European Union.

3. Cooperation with civil society

Civil society organizations

57. The Committee continued its work with civil society organizations, academic institutions, think tanks and media representatives, including consultations with civil society representatives, participation in meetings organized by civil society organizations and the accreditation of new organizations. This work was reviewed and further advanced at the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace. It gave the civil society representatives and other participants from all regions of the world, especially from Europe, an opportunity to highlight their work and coordinate their responses to recent developments. It provided civil society representatives with an opportunity to discuss the situation on the ground, and their programmes in support of the Palestinian people and to improve coordination of their activities. The Committee was appreciative of the work done by civil society organizations, encouraging them to continue contributing to efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

58. The Committee maintained and developed its liaison with national, regional and international coordinating mechanisms cooperating with it, in addition to its established liaison with a large number of individual organizations. Representatives of civil society participated in all meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee, including the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2006. During the period under review, the Committee also accredited three new organizations. Consultations between the delegation of the Committee and representatives of organizations accredited to the Committee were held at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome on 24 March 2007, following the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Participating civil society representatives discussed the response of civil society to the continuing

humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and exchanged views with the Committee's delegation on ways to strengthen their cooperation. Over the past year, the Chairman of the Committee met with representatives of civil society organizations in New York and at the meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee away from Headquarters.

59. The Division for Palestinian Rights maintained the Internet website "Civil society network on the Question of Palestine" (http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/ngo) as a tool for the exchange of information and for cooperation between civil society and the Committee. At the request of the Committee, the Division also continued to issue its bimonthly newsletter, NGO Action News, covering the activities of civil society on the various aspects of the question of Palestine.

Parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations

60. The Committee continued to develop its liaison with national and regional parliaments and their organizations and invited a number of parliamentarians to speak at its meetings. During the year, the Bureau of the Committee has met with members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Knesset and other national parliaments. The holding of the annual United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace at the European Parliament in Brussels in August 2007 resulted in new synergies between the Committee, Parliamentarians and civil society, helping to advance the political process.

4. Research, monitoring and publications

61. The Division carried out research and monitoring activities and responded to requests for information and briefings on the question of Palestine. Under the guidance of the Committee, which reiterated the relevance of the research, monitoring and publications programme, it also prepared the publications listed below for dissemination, including through UNISPAL:

(a) Monthly bulletin on action taken by United Nations and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;

(b) Monthly chronology of events relating to the question of Palestine, based on media reports and other sources;

(c) Reports of international meetings and conferences organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(d) Special bulletins and information notes on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(e) Periodic reviews of developments related to the Middle East peace process;

(f) Annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine.

5. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

62. The Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant technical and library services of the United Nations Secretariat, continued to administer, maintain, expand and develop UNISPAL and the "Question of Palestine" website, which is

located on the United Nations home page under "Peace and Security", pursuant to successive annual General Assembly mandates. This included the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of the technical components of the system to ensure the uninterrupted presence of UNISPAL on the Internet and involved the expansion of the document collection to include relevant new and old documents. In addition, steps continued to be taken to enhance the user-friendliness and usefulness of the system (http://unispal.un.org), including by incorporating additional multimedia content and a streamlined search facility.

6. Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority

63. Two staff members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority participated in a training programme conducted by the Division from September to December 2006, in conjunction with the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. The trainees familiarized themselves with various aspects of the work of the Secretariat and other organs and conducted research on specific topics.

7. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

64. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed at Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna on 29 November 2006. On the occasion of the observance at Headquarters, in addition to a special meeting of the Committee and other activities, a cultural exhibit entitled "Contextualization: A Palestinian Narrative" was organized by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations under the auspices of the Committee. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day of Solidarity had also been observed in many cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

65. In adopting its programme of work, the Committee decided that a similar observance of the International Day of Solidarity should be organized in 2007.

Chapter VI

Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/24

66. The Department of Public Information, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/24, continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine in order to raise the awareness of the international community on this question and on the situation in the Middle East in such a way as to contribute effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process.

67. During the period under review, the Department covered intergovernmental meetings and related press briefings using all media at its disposal. The Department produced a total of 168 press releases, providing summaries in English and French of formal meetings and briefings, and distributed live television coverage to broadcasters around the world. Television coverage was also posted on the Internet ("webcast") for easy viewing.

68. Two short television features were produced by UNTV for its "United Nations in Action" programme and a longer feature, focusing on the effects of the intifada on children, was produced for the Department's new television magazine programme "21st Century". Close to 30 video packages were distributed via satellite feed to broadcast points around the world on a range of issues related to the question of Palestine.

69. In news reports and features, United Nations Radio covered a number of issues, including the Organization's humanitarian work, diplomatic engagement, the subject of inalienable human rights and critical events of the day, producing hundreds of radio programmes in the six official languages and in Portuguese for distribution to broadcast partners. The Arabic Language Unit reported on the meetings held in Doha and Rome and on other meetings organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

70. The United Nations News Centre, the most heavily visited web portal managed by the Department, continuously highlighted stories related to the question of Palestine in the six official languages. In addition, a special focus page on the Middle East provided an in-depth and user-friendly venue for accessing information on the issue.

71. As part of its special information programme on Palestine, the Department organized a training programme for nine young Palestinian journalists at Headquarters and in Washington, D.C., from 6 November to 11 December 2006. The programme was aimed at strengthening the capacities of the participants as print media professionals.

72. In cooperation with the Foreign Ministry of Japan and the United Nations University, the Department organized the fifteenth International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East in Tokyo on 26 and 27 June 2007. Press releases were issued on the proceedings. The seminar was covered by all the major Japanese media and by select Israeli, Palestinian and international media.

73. The *UN Chronicle* magazine regularly reported on Palestine in its General Assembly coverage, in particular on the work of the Fourth and Sixth Committees,

and carried an opinion piece by Gregory Levey on the communication breakdown between the Israeli and the Palestinian authorities. It also featured a number of web articles on the difficult future of Gaza, the new humanitarian symbol of the red crystal and the Unlearning Intolerance Seminar on Cartooning for Peace organized by the Outreach Division, which included discussion on the question of Palestine.

74. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued to digitize relevant documents for the UNISPAL document collection.

75. The network of United Nations information centres, services and offices continued to disseminate information on the question of Palestine and to organize special outreach activities. The information centres engaged in over 20 activities in recognition of Palestinian rights. A major focus of activities was the promotion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Department assisted in the installation of the annual exhibit on the question of Palestine at Headquarters. The Secretary-General's message for the Day was widely disseminated in official and non-official languages. In Tunis, the information centre organized a weeklong public exhibition and an observance of the Day. A solemn meeting to commemorate the day was organized by the information centre in Dar-es-Salaam, in collaboration with the Embassy of Palestine. The Regional Information Centre in Brussels provided assistance and press coverage for the March mission of the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to Brussels for three days of meetings with European Union officials. The information centre in Cairo translated and disseminated widely the press release issued by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and arranged a press conference for the Special Committee.

Chapter VII

Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

76. **The year 2007 marked 40 years of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Committee emphasizes that the occupation is the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For 40 years, the occupying Power has systematically altered the Palestinian land by implementing its illegal policy of building settlements and, more recently, constructing a wall in the West Bank, including around East Jerusalem. Continued closures, the sealing-off of the Gaza Strip, unrelenting Israeli incursions into Palestinian population centres and the humiliating system of checkpoints throughout the West Bank have had a most destructive effect on the lives of the Palestinian people and have rendered the Palestinian Authority nearly dysfunctional. The situation has further deteriorated owing to the polarization within Palestinian society, which led, in June 2007, to an armed takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas forces. The Committee noted rising international awareness of the fact that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region would remain elusive until the national rights of the Palestinian people have been realized. In addition, there appears to be greater consciousness that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the major underlying factors of the rift between Western and Islamic societies.**

77. **The Committee calls upon Israel to end its military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to stop any other measures that further undermine Palestinian institutions. It again reminds Israel, the occupying Power, that it is bound by the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, which obliges parties to the Convention to protect civilians during hostilities. Its applicability to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has been repeatedly confirmed by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Israel must release, immediately and unconditionally, all imprisoned cabinet members and parliamentarians, as well as other Palestinian prisoners. The Committee strongly condemns the killing of innocent civilians by either side. It denounces rocket attacks on Israel and calls for a cessation of these activities by Palestinian armed groups. The Committee is strongly opposed to the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and to efforts to complete the construction of the wall. The Committee reiterates its position of principle that these activities are contrary to international humanitarian law and numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, adopted since 1967, as well as the provisions of the road map. Israel must cease and reverse all illegal actions in the Palestinian Territory it has occupied since 1967.**

78. **The Committee calls upon the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to unite in support of President Abbas, his government and all democratically elected Palestinian institutions and to resolve their political differences by peaceful means. The Committee calls for the restoration of the situation in the Gaza Strip to that which existed prior to the June events and for measures to be taken to preserve the territorial unity and integrity of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Committee firmly believes that the unity of the Palestinian people is an essential condition for achieving a viable solution of the question of Palestine.**

The Committee supports national dialogue among Palestinians to achieve national reconciliation. In this regard, the Committee reiterates its long-standing position that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and, as such, an essential party to any negotiations aimed at resolving the question of Palestine by peaceful means.

79. **The Committee reiterates that only a negotiated solution can bring about the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine through the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine, based on the 1967 borders. A settlement should be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) in particular, and other relevant resolutions. It is incumbent on the Security Council to ensure a speedy and full implementation of its own resolutions. The Council should decide on effective steps to protect the civilian population, end hostilities and guide the parties, with the active involvement of the Quartet and regional actors, to a negotiated settlement. The Committee notes the steps taken by the Board and its secretariat to commence the mandated work on the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and requests all involved to expedite their efforts to render the Register operational. The Committee is encouraged by international efforts to relaunch the peace process. For it to succeed it is necessary to achieve concrete performance-based agreements relating to permanent status issues and the establishment of a timeline for their implementation. Any diplomatic process needs to be buttressed by urgent and meaningful steps on the ground. The continued support of the international community is crucial for advancing the process, namely a consistent dialogue between the Quartet and the parties, and the inclusion of regional partners. The Arab Peace Initiative remains a crucial element for advancing peace in the region. Member States of the European Union are encouraged to take a more proactive role in international efforts at resolving the conflict.**

80. **The Committee is convinced that, through the programme of mandated activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights, it will be able to continue to generate heightened international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine, international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In this connection, the Committee emphasizes the essential contribution of the Division in support of its mandate aimed at enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. It notes with satisfaction: (a) the level of dialogue, engagement and support of the international community for its programme objectives, for instance, in terms of both participation at the meetings convened and the use of printed and electronic information materials provided by the Division; (b) the number of civil society organizations that have received accreditation to the Committee; and (c) the number of pages viewed on the United Nations website on the question of Palestine. The Committee also considers that the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority has proved its usefulness and requests that it be continued.**

81. **The Committee considers that its programme of international meetings and conferences contributes to focusing the attention of Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and the general public on**

current issues and the need for advancing a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The meetings also contribute to raising international awareness of the root cause of the conflict, namely the occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to mobilizing international support for efforts to resolve the conflict. The Committee will continue the programme to foster support for the attainment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, the right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and the right of Palestine refugees to return. The Committee, through its Bureau, will regularly assess the outcomes of the international meetings and conferences and, where required, decide on steps to enhance their contribution to the mandated goals of the Committee. In its meetings programme for 2008, the Committee intends to address issues such as the responsibility of all Governments to apply international law to all aspects of the question of Palestine, in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice; the need to convene the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention in view of the systematic violation by the occupying Power of international humanitarian law; the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba and the need to find a just solution for the Palestine refugee issue; the adverse consequences of the settlement policy and the construction of the wall for the achievement of a two-State solution; the collective international responsibility to protect the Palestinian people; the need to alleviate humanitarian and socio-economic hardships, including the plight of Palestinian women and children; and continuing efforts of civil society to build an effective international solidarity movement.

82. The Committee commends civil society organizations for their efforts to uphold international legitimacy with regard to the question of Palestine through advocacy and the mobilization of public opinion and for their initiatives aimed at alleviating the plight of the Palestinian people. It welcomes the efforts by organizations worldwide to mark 40 years of the occupation, thus raising public awareness of the issue. The Committee appreciates the support it receives from the Secretariat in strengthening cooperation with civil society. The Committee encourages civil society organizations to broaden their base, involving trade unions and other large organizations, and to focus and harmonize their advocacy efforts at the local, national, regional and international levels with respect to the legal obligations of Governments, as emphasized in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. It supports all humanitarian and assistance initiatives geared towards improving the daily lives of the Palestinians. The Committee will continue to involve parliamentarians in its programme of international meetings and conferences. The Committee is of the opinion that the experience and political influence of lawmakers and their organizations can be instrumental in consolidating the democratic process and institution-building in the territory under the Palestinian Authority, strengthening political dialogue between the parties, and in applying norms of international law to efforts at resolving the conflict.

83. The Committee requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support; the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities, such as the further expansion and development of UNISPAL, including the graphic enhancement of the "Question of Palestine" website; the annual training programme for staff of the

Palestinian Authority; and the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

84. **The Committee is of the view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and public opinion of the relevant issues. The Committee requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility, as warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.**

85. **Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and besetting the peace process, the Committee calls upon all States to join it in this endeavour and to extend their cooperation and support to the Committee, and invites the General Assembly again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate.**

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